



## Mr. Ford's Page

**A**N ERA of common sense seems to have dawned upon the United States. If it only maintains itself for two or three years we shall be able to drop the "seems to have" and say "has dawned." We have had too much experience as a nation to hail the first furrow as a guaranty of how the whole field will be plowed, but even the most cautious and skeptical of us are ready to say that it really seems as if the new era not only has come (we knew that all along) but has come to the welcome of those who understand it and wish it well. The new era always comes; sometimes it is met with opposition; sometimes it is met with co-operation.

One of the counsels of caution at a time like this is to be very certain that we do not mistake a reactionary turn for a return of common sense. We have passed through a period of fireworks of every description, and the making of a great many idealistic maps of progress, and the utterance of all sorts of noble sentiments, but we didn't get anywhere. It was a convention, not a march. Lovely things were said, but when we got home we found the furnace out.

Reactionaries have frequently taken advantage of the recoil from such a period, and they have promised "the good old times"—which usually meant the bad old abuses—and because they were perfectly void of vision they were regarded as "practical men" and their return to power has been hailed—for a brief illusionary time—as the return of common sense. That is one of the memories that make us cautious. Is it reaction or common sense?

At any rate, the instincts of the people are fairly accurate in gauging the state of public affairs, and the people rather feel that at present we are following a safe and substantial policy and that what we may lack in brilliance in the conduct of our public affairs is more than made up in soundness and sanity. It is a great thing to evoke that feeling in a nation, especially without doing anything sensational, but just by attending day by day the daily duties as they come up. It is a very notable achievement to do that, and the President seems to have accomplished it.

The administration slogan of "less government in business and more business in government" is a very good one, not mainly on account of business or government, but on account of the people. Business is not the reason why these United States were founded, neither is government the reason. The Declaration of Independence is not a business charter nor is the Constitution of the United States a commercial schedule. The United States is land and people, and government and business are but methods by which the life of the people on the land is made worth while. They are servants only, never were anything but servants, and never caused anything but trouble when they forgot for a time that they were servants. The moment the people become adjuncts to business, or to government, that moment the law of retribution begins to work, for such a relation is unnatural, immoral, inhuman—wrong in every way.

Yet we cannot live without business and we cannot live without government. Even the hobo cannot live without business, for it is the most complex mechanical and commercial processes that give him his free rides across the country and provide the bread which he gets as hand-outs at back doors. Even the anarchist cannot live without government; it was the quiet and orderliness provided by government that gave men intelligence and leisure enough to think out the theory of anarchy, and whenever anarchy comes into temporary control it proceeds to institute the most steel-ribbed government ever known. Business and government are necessary as servants, like water and grain are; as masters they overturn the natural order.

It ought to be fundamental that you will never find what is good for business or government until you find what is good for the

people, and it is equally fundamental that what appears to be good for business and government is not to be trusted at all, until it has been tested out by the principle of the people's good. We are always treating business, doctoring it, inventing laws which we think will protect or stimulate it. Go to the big conventions—business is regarded as a separate entity, a thing in itself, a separate empire; without a thought of the real fundamental entity, the people, and that encompassing empire, the people's good.

All the business that there ever was is right here now, in the people. Business is nothing more nor less than the supply of the people's needs. The need of the people to eat every day, to be clothed and sheltered, is the basic guaranty of business. If the people should dispense with these needs, there would be no business. Whenever a fool policy interferes with the people's ability to supply those needs in an honorable, orderly way, business slumps. There is always enough Supply—Nature and Nature's God saw to that long beforehand; there is always enough De-

mand—the recurring needs of human life provide for that; the kink is somewhere in between, in the realm which we call "commerce," and centers around a human invention called "money." The material for business is always present—always present; human interference by man-made laws causes trouble.

One step in the right direction is the new idea which seems to be held by the administration that the problems of the country must be settled in the country proper, and not in Washington. We have fallen into the bad habit of looking to Washington as to some shrine whose oracles possessed all wisdom. Now, whenever sensible men comprise the administration they know that all wisdom is not summed up in them. That is one of the very hopeful qualities of the present administration—there has not yet appeared among them any who imagines himself a superman. They are good workmen trying to do a creditable job and not afraid to ask counsel or assistance when they need it.

But when you get a whole country thinking that Washington is a sort of heaven and behind its clouds dwell omniscience and omnipotence, you are educating the country into a dependent state of mind which augurs ill for the future. Our help does not come from Washington, but from ourselves; our help may, however, go to Washington as a sort of central distribution point where all our efforts are co-ordinated for the general good.

It is, therefore, quite an important fact—much more important as principle than as policy—that the present administration has undertaken to let the United States be the United States with Washington as its office, instead of attempting to make Washington the United States with the rest of the country serving as a very useful back yard.

It puts the country's welfare up to us—all of us. And that is where it should be. A few more years of dependence on Washington, praying to Washington, hoping for miraculous occurrences and showers of blessings from Washington would have placed this country in a condition where almost any demagogue sufficiently beclouded with mystic glory could have come along and led us into the wilderness. That danger is past. We are once more a democratic republic. The autocracy of government, the autocracy of big business, the autocracy of caste have all disappeared, and if they remain out, we may consider that we have scraped through a dangerous place: dangerous because the people hardly scented the danger; dangerous because they were falling into the habit of letting the government do it, the government being a few men who can be seated in a very small room.

The country is now permitted to get under its own problems. The ancient principle is again exalted that the country belongs to the nation. There are no demigods, and we can't use demagogues.

***THE present administration has staged a return to common sense which, if given a long enough run, will work wonders. The President does not regard the United States as Washington's back yard. We have had too much of that. Washington has been a sort of heaven where omniscience and omnipotence dwelt, to which the people prayed, and from which miracles and showers of blessings might be expected. We were rapidly falling into the habit of mistaking the government for the nation. The country is getting under its own problems. Washington has ceased to be a throne and has become a clearing house. We are once more a democratic republic. It is an era which the historian might describe as "the return of the American people to the United States."***